



The villa was probably the hunting lodge of Maximian, co-emperor with Diocletian. The extraordinary mosaics cover nearly every floor. Their excellent condition is probably due to the fact that a mudslide had kept this site covered and hidden from view for a thousand years until it was finally excavated in 1950.





Gary's dream job!

On Sunday, May 6 the weather was back to gorgeous and sunny! In the morning we visited the archaeological museum of Siracusa, the greek theater and a grotto called the "Ear of Dionysius" where Athenian captives were held after a battle for Siracusa in 435 B.C.



WWII gun emplacement



At 7pm we were at the Piazza del Duomo again to join the procession of Santa Lucia. The square was packed with people, and a great cheer went up when the simulacrum appeared from the doors of the church. The civic band began playing, as the incredibly heavy, silver plated image was lifted by about 50 men, carried about 20 feet, then set down while the bearers gathered their strength again. We followed the procession, right behind the band, for about an hour.





As darkness came on, we left the procession and had a great pizza and salad at Pizzeria Nona Margherita. By 10pm, we had wandered back to Piazza del Duomo expecting the procession to have ended as scheduled with a 9pm mass at the Duomo. But the piazza was empty! After a gelato at the cafe on the piazza, we started back to our car when we heard the civic band in the distance. It had been four hours since the procession had started, and we found the band, a crowd of several hundred people, and a very tired group of green-hatted bearers still struggling to move Santa Lucia, 20 feet at a time, back to the Duomo ... with a quarter mile still to go.



Monday, May 7: We drove through the heart of Sicily from southeast to north-west. We stopped for a lunch of wild boar and home-grown mushrooms in the mountain town of Petralia Sottana. We had to stop several times to admire the beautiful wildflowers!





The cathedral of Monreale is just outside Palermo. It's a 12th century Norman church showing Norman, Arab and Byzantine elements. The cloisters adjacent to the church were magnificent.



The walls of the aisles, sanctuary and apse are entirely covered with gilded mosaics.

A traditional Sicilian pony cart and a very tired dog.

